

## LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE PROGRAM SURVEY RESULTS

Mary Krutulis

The survey which was sent to the 49 American Library Association accredited library and information science programs in the United States and Canada was designed to determine the interest level of administration, faculty, and students toward area librarianship. For the most part very general information was sought with more specifics hopefully to be addressed by the participants in this conference.

One major flaw in the survey which quickly became evident was that the term "area librarianship" was not adequately defined as **geographic area specialization**. Responses indicated that the term was sometimes confused with subject specialization and sometimes completely unfamiliar. Following inquiries, an attempt was made to clarify the terminology. Some surveys may have been completed and returned prior to that clarification, and, therefore, may reflect a misconception.

Thirty-five of the 49 programs surveyed responded for a high 71% response rate. Of those responding, however, only 26 expressed interest in the survey results. It was disheartening to discover that some library educators could remain uninterested in a significant potential career track for librarians.

### Summary of major information obtained from LIS Program Surveys

Six of the 35 respondents (17%) currently offer course work primarily focused on education for area librarianship. This is one question which may have been misinterpreted because of the terminology. However, we believe that clarification would result in a lower number, since those answering in the positive for subject area librarianship would be eliminated, and there would not be an increase in those involved in education for geographic area librarianship. Two of the respondents (6%) offer dual programs in area studies and library science, while six have discussed a need for such a program. Ten programs have had students express an interest in area librarianship within the last year, so there is a gap between those where interest has been expressed and those who have discussed the matter of education for area librarianship at all. This may indicate that programs are not taking cues provided by their students or potential students, but may also indicate that the numbers of inquiries are not sufficient to prompt major interest on the part of faculty or administrators. Four respondents indicated that they have recruited faculty in the last five years who have a research interest in area librarianship.

**Question 1: Does your school or program offer course work that is primarily focused on education for area librarian/specialist programs?** was designed to determine whether, if students were not aware of geographic area specialization as a possible career path, it might be brought to their attention by a specific class or classes. The responses possibly were tainted by incomplete understanding of "area librarianship".

The six positive responses to this query were from the University of Hawaii, the University of Illinois, Indiana University, Pratt Institute, Simmons College, and the University of Texas at Austin. The remaining 29 respondents replied in the negative. Examples of courses offered include: "Southeast Asian Bibliography," "Pacific Islands Information Sources," and "Seminar in Latin American Library Studies."

**Questions 2a: Is area librarianship covered in an academic librarianship or research libraries course? and 2b: Is it covered in any other course?** were intended to determine whether, in the absence of an actual course devoted to geographic area librarianship, this career track is being brought to the attention of students in another course or courses.

Answering these questions required knowledge of curriculum or perhaps consultation with other faculty by the primary respondent to determine course content. Fifteen respondents answered 2a in the affirmative with qualifying remarks such as, "to some extent, regarding collection development," "briefly," and "as a minor part." There were 16 negative answers, and four surveys had no response. Question 2b had 11 positive answers with qualifications such as, "the Organizational Context of Library and Information Science allows attention to specific environments...while learning about similarities among all of them," "a course entitled International Librarianship covers area specialization," and "International and Comparative Librarianship." There were 16 negative answers, two were not sure about coverage in other courses, and six respondents left the answer blank.

**Question 3a: Do you currently offer a dual degree program in area studies and library science?** (yes, answer **questions b** and **c**; no, answer **question d**.) Two programs, the University of Hawaii and Indiana University, answered in the affirmative concerning dual degrees. The remaining 33 respondents gave negative answers. **3b: In what world areas?** The University of Hawaii offers a dual program in the "Asian/Pacific Area," while Indiana University has a "Specialization in African Studies Librarianship which is not a dual degree program since African Studies does not offer a graduate degree. Approved for 1996-97 is a dual degree program with Russian and East European Studies, and under discussion/development are dual programs with the following IU centers: West European, Central Eurasian, East Asian, and Latin American & Caribbean." **3c: How many of your total graduates from the last ten years have received such a degree?** elicited from the University of Hawaii, "two students," and from Indiana University, "new program, so no graduates yet." **3d: Has the need for such a program been discussed?** garnered six positive responses, 23 negatives and four blanks.

**Question 4: In the last year, have any students mentioned to you an interest in, or had questions about, becoming an area librarian/specialist?** was designed to gauge student interest level. Again, accuracy here may be affected by confusion about term "area librarianship." Here, as mentioned earlier, there were ten positive responses, 22 negatives, and three blanks. It is difficult to reconcile almost one third of the respondents having interested students with fewer than half discussing the possibility/necessity of training in area librarianship.

**Question 5: Are you currently posting any openings for area specialist internships?** resulted in 11 yes responses, 21 no, and three blanks. Again, almost one third of the respondents have current internship openings in area librarianship which is difficult to reconcile with no discussion of potential in the field within their programs.

**Question 6: About how many position listings per year for area librarians/specialists does your placement office receive?** received answers ranging from none to 200, with all but the largest answer being less than 20. Some of these responses may also be skewed by

misconceptions of the "area librarianship" designation. Probably the number actually is relatively small because these positions do not tend to be entry level, and, therefore, may be advertised in other venues which are perceived to be more appropriate than schools of library and information science with their preponderance of entry level job seekers.

**Question 7a: Have you recruited any faculty in the last five years who have a research interest in area librarianship?** elicited four positive responses and 31 negative responses, one accompanied by the comment, "have three faculty already from non-American countries who address issues of non-Western librarianship." **7b: In what world areas?** brought news of specialists in Latin American librarianship, international librarianship, Africa, and Scandinavia/Northern Europe.

The low number of faculty interested in area librarianship who have been recruited within the last five years, seems to correlate with the low number of courses in area librarianship. A lack exists in that the number of faculty with program(s) longer than five years and having interest in area librarianship was not covered by a specific survey question. As a side note, the most recent ALISE directory lists only two faculty members who number "Area Studies" (#51) among their top five research/teaching areas.

The **Comments** included in the survey indicate the wide range of reactions concerning geographic area librarianship--from "foreign concept" (no pun intended) to relating the concept strictly to International Librarianship, to which it is undeniably but far from exclusively linked. The comments included:

"We do very little with this currently, although we often discuss the need for a program in Latin American Librarianship."

"Area librarianship (in the sense of geographic areas) is such a foreign concept to me I had no idea what you were talking about until the middle of the second page."

"Have just placed a student in Kazakhstan. He is unusual."

"The student body at. . . includes representatives from more than thirty nations. Study of specific areas is arranged on an individual basis. Typically students enroll in a practicum and in the Research or Special Studies course. There are many opportunities for internships in (this) area."

"This is not a high priority for our program. Some interest does exist, largely from area librarians in our area."

"We are interested in Africa South of the Sahara."

The second-to-last comment would seem to hold the key to further discussion about area librarianship and library and information science education programs. It is the area librarians themselves who most clearly recognize the need to educate professionals in area librarianship, and who responded most enthusiastically to the survey and to this conference. It is from them that library education will need to take its cues. Their cooperation and input are absolutely necessary in developing the proper format for recruiting and educating professionals in area librarianship.